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A STREET OF LITTLE SHOPS

They have quite the grandest store on the street.

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A STREET OF LITTLE SHOPS

MARGERY WILLIAMS BIANCO

with a new introduction by
Augusta Baker

Gregg Press
A Division of G. K. Hall & Co.
Boston
1981

With the exception of the Introduction, this is a complete photographic reprint of a work first published in New York by Doubleday & Company, Inc. in 1932.

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Grateful acknowledgement is made to Jean W. Bianco for the use of her rare and extremely valuable first American edition of *A Street of Little Shops* for reproduction of this edition.

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Introduction

In 1934, when I was a young library school student, I began searching for a story—neither a folk nor a fairy tale—I could tell to children When I discovered *A Street of Little Shops* (1932), and in it, "The Baker's Daughter," I knew I found my story. What attracted me most was not that the title included my surname, but rather, the way in which the story begins "O but the Baker's Daughter is beautiful!" (p 21) A more detailed description of the Baker's Daughter follows and we quickly realize that she is also offensively arrogant When Bianco describes the Baker's shop, we can smell the delicious, intriguing odors and see the "hot, untidy little man in shirt sleeves" (p 22) with his tray of goodies We can also see the very special cake that is always in the middle of his window, the one he will never sell He says, "That's not for sale. You can have one by three o'clock" (p. 23) Though the Baker's Daughter's air of superiority has driven away most of her friends, she does have one—Carmelita Miggs The Baker's Daughter decides to take the special cake out of the window and present it to Carmelita for her birthday What happens when it comes time to cut the cake is fit punishment for the Baker's Daughter, and her story became my favorite for April Fool's Day Years later, on my birthday (April 1), all the children's librarians at the New York Public Library presented me with a replica of the Baker's birthday cake—a big pasteboard shell covered with icing, pink roses, and sugar letters

There are seven stories in *A Street of Little Shops* and each one is different and unique They are about the shops found on the Main Streets of little villages in the U S in the 1920s Bianco captures the spirit of

these villages so accurately that we can plainly see "a little town with pink and green and yellow houses, and a village green and a little white church steeple and a railroad station, and a very busy little street with shops on both sides" (p 4) Imagination and humor abound in each story The people are very real but Bianco adds a make-believe touch to all seven tales

Another one of my favorite stories from this fine collection is "Mr Murdle's Heart," perfect for telling on St Valentine's Day As long as his Large Heart, pink and purple with yellow edges and a white middle hung in the back of his shop Mr Murdle was generous and loving and "one of the happiest people in the world" (p 41) When his aunt throws away the Large Heart while tidying the shop one day, Mr. Murdle becomes a humorless, businesslike man Of course he regains his heart in time and all is well

The prominent children's book critic Anne Carroll Moore, writing about Margery Williams Bianco in *Crossroads to Childhood* (1926), said, "It is this sure sense of the personalities of her characters, whether toys or living creatures, and her complete grasp of dramatic requirements that give Mrs Bianco's work an assured high place among children's stories " In *Poor Cecco* (1925) there is flavor, sophistication, and color, as well as the delight of a child. Though Bianco delighted in writing about toys and animals she could also write about the foibles of people with insight and humor *The Hurdy-Gurdy Man* (1933, Gregg Press edition, 1980) became known to the boys and girls of Harlem as a harbinger of spring when I shared it, along with Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), with hundreds of city children at the first signs of that joyous season It was a perfect book to read aloud, and it always aroused nostalgic feelings in me because I remembered hurdy-gurdy men from my Baltimore childhood These are but two of the many de lightful books written by Margery Williams Bianco

Bianco was also a sensitive translator Storytellers will always be grateful for her fine translation, from the French, of Blaise Cendrar's *Little Black Stories for Little White Children* (1929), a collection of eleven African tales She skillfully retained their rhythm, rich imagery, directness, and strong creative ideas.

Margery Bianco is remembered as well for her judicious reviews of children's books. This is not always the case when the reviewer is also a writer. She was a frequent and highly regarded contributor to Anne Carroll Moore's prestigious columns in *The New York Herald Tribune*.

Illustrations to her books have always fit the subject matter nicely, and Grace Paull, though not an outstanding artist, was just the right illustrator for *A Street of Little Shops*. Her black and white pictures convey the humor in the stories as well as the atmosphere of a small American town in the 1920s.

For too long storytellers have told the stories contained here without being able to give children the book from which they came. Children still delight in them and storytellers will welcome their return to print. Today's children can now read about the Baker's Daughter and how she got her come-uppance, just as their parents and grandparents did so many years ago.

Augusta Baker
Columbia, South Carolina

FOR

LORENZO

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ABOUT THE STREET

ABOUT THE STREET

THESE are stories about a little street in a little town in the country. Perhaps you know the town. Perhaps it is the very town where you go, every Saturday morning, to do your shopping. If so, then you certainly know the Porium Twins, and Miss Minnegan and the Sad-

dler's Horse, and you very likely buy your ice-cream cones from Mr. Murdle. In that case, of course, you will know just as much about them all as I do, and so you can shut this book up at once, and not even bother to read it.

But in case you don't, then, the very next time that you happen to follow a certain winding road and find that it leads you, quite by chance, to a little town with pink and green and yellow houses, and a village green and a little white church steeple and a railroad station, and a very busy little street with shops on both sides, then you might look very carefully and you will perhaps catch sight of Mr. A and Mr. P behind their grocery counter, of Mr. Murdle sitting in his doorway with the cats asleep all around him, of the Baker's beautiful daughter sucking her beads as she strolls up and down, of Billy Jones himself, or of any other of the people in this book. If so, you can give them my very best regards.

Except, perhaps, the Baker's daughter. Let me tell you something in confidence, just between you and me, I *don't* like her!

MR. A AND MR. P

"Don't you want some chewing gum?"

...

MR. A AND MR. P

OF ALL the storekeepers in town there are none so merry as Mr. A and Mr. P.

They have quite the grandest store on the street. Outside it is painted a bright cheerful red, and inside it is full of all the things that a grocery store should

have—soap and crackers and sardines and tubs of butter and red shiny apples, besides shelves and shelves of everything you could possibly think of, all put up in cans.

Mr. A is tall and thin, and Mr. P is short and stout. Mr. A has red hair, and Mr. P has very little hair at all. Mr. A can reach all the things off the top shelves, and Mr. P can get all the things off the bottom shelves. If there is anything on the very top shelf of all, and they have to get the long poker and poke it down, then Mr. A pokes and Mr. P catches, because Mr. P's lap is the widest.

In fact they do everything together. Mr. A takes the money and Mr. P rings the bell. Mr. A counts the groceries, and Mr. P writes them down. Mr. A makes the jokes, and Mr. P laughs at them.

And of an evening, when the store is closed and work is over, then Mr. A plays the flute and Mr. P plays the accordion.

You would think that when two people get along together so well, they would never have a quarrel in the world. But once upon a time they did, and this is how it happened.

For a long time they had been wondering what to do to make their life even merrier than it was. They had tried playing baseball with the soup cans, and football with the watermelons, and building all sorts of castles out of ketchup bottles and breakfast foods, just to see them come tumbling down again. But after a while they got tired of all this, and there just didn't seem anything new to play at.

Then Mr. A had a grand idea. He thought he would change the prices of everything in the store, over-night, just to see how surprised the customers would look when they came around next morning. He didn't want Mr. P to know about it, so that it might be a nice surprise for him, too. For Mr. A was always trying to think of something that would please Mr. P.

But Mr. P, too, was always trying to think of something that would please and surprise Mr. A. And unfortunately he happened to think of exactly the same thing, and he thought of it at almost exactly the same moment as Mr. A.

So each of them, very secretly, set about writing a whole set of new tickets, and each of them, also very secretly, went about sticking the new

tickets just where they thought it would be most fun.

Mr. A would turn his head suddenly and want to know what Mr. P was giggling about, and Mr. P would stop writing his secret tickets long enough to ask *why* Mr. A was chuckling so, and they would both go off into peals of laughter and then look very solemn and begin working away again faster than ever.

Finally they locked up their store and went home for the night.

The first customer to come next morning was a housewife, and she wanted three cakes of soap for a quarter.

"Twelve cents a-piece!" said Mr. A, for he had changed the tickets from the breakfast cereal.

"But they're always three for a quarter," said the housewife.

"Not now, not now!" said Mr. A. "Maybe you're thinking of soup. Soup's three for a quarter. To-day," he added, and then began to giggle. He couldn't help it.

"Why, no it isn't!" cried Mr. P, beginning to giggle too. "It's two for nineteen. Look at that!"

And he winked at Mr. A, but for some reason Mr. A didn't seem to think it was funny at all.

"I tell you it's three for a quarter!" he said indignantly. "The whole week, too!"

"Two for nineteen, two for nineteen!" chanted Mr. P, in an irritating sort of way, and he went about the store humming "Two for nineteen, two for nineteen!"

"Just like a hen that's laid an egg!" thought Mr. A, beginning to get very annoyed, as people do when their jokes don't turn out to be funny after all.

The next customer wanted sugar and potatoes.

"Six for fifteen!" shouted Mr. P loudly.

"Two for forty-nine!" yelled Mr. A, banging his fist on the counter.

The customers began to get worried. They didn't know what to make of it at all. And the more Mr. A chuckled, the madder Mr. P got, and every time Mr. P giggled, Mr. A was cross enough to bite his head off.

In the afternoon it was worse. No one knew what anything cost at all. Half the customers were buying all sorts of things they didn't need just because they were cheap, and the other half were shouting that they wanted their money back. As fast as Mr. A stuck a

ticket on one shelf Mr. P tore it down and put a different one in its place. They kept rushing round and round the store, doing nothing but change the tickets, and the last straw was when Mr. A marked a whole crate of watermelons four for fifteen cents, and all the boys from the neighborhood came pouring into the store so fast one couldn't even count them. And above all the turmoil, and the customers snatching this thing and that—for by this time they were so confused that they started waiting on one another—you might hear Mr. A's high squeaky voice shouting "Six for nineteen! Six for nineteen, I tell you!" and Mr. P's deep bass rumbling "Three for a quarter! Three for a quarter!"

It was like a nightmare!

When six o'clock came round Mr. A and Mr. P were both exhausted. Mr. A just threw his apron over his head and started rushing off down the street on his long thin legs, looking neither to right nor left, while Mr. P shooed the last customer out of the store and then sank right down on the onion crate and burst out sobbing.

He sobbed for quite a long time. When he had finished he felt a little bit better. So he mopped his

eyes and blew his nose, and then he jumped up off the onion crate and rushed out of the store, not even banging the door behind him, and pattered off along the sidewalk as fast as he could go.

It was the very first time in all their lives that Mr. A and Mr. P had not walked home together. For years they had hung their two little aprons up side by side at exactly six o'clock, and at exactly two minutes past six they had taken their two hats and locked the store and strolled home side by side.

But this time Mr. A hadn't even gone home at all. He was far too upset. He went striding along through the town very fast. not caring at all which way he went, till he came to the place where the sidewalk ended and the country began, and there Mr. P finally saw him, still striding along with his nose in the air and his apron flapping in the breeze.

Now Mr. A was walking much faster than Mr. P, and so Mr. P had to make his stout little legs work very hard indeed to catch up with him, but catch up he did. And as soon as Mr. A heard that little patter-patter coming along behind him he slowed down a bit,

and pretended to be looking at the landscape. So side by side, but neither looking at the other, they went along the road and across a field, until they came to a big log that was lying under a hickory tree, and there they both sat down side by side—plump!

Mr. A was still very cross, and Mr. P was still very hot and out of breath, so for a long while neither of them spoke. Then Mr. A looked round at Mr. P and gave a big sniff. And Mr. P looked at Mr. A, and he gave a sniff, too. And then they both began to wriggle their toes on the ground.

Presently Mr. P said:

"I shouldn't think you need be so mean, just because I did something to please you!"

And Mr. A said:

"Well, you didn't have to be so cross, just because I wanted to give you a s-surprise!"

"I only did it to make you laugh!" said Mr. P.

"I thought you'd be very pleased and m-merry!" said Mr. A.

Then Mr. A pulled a packet of lemon drops out of his apron pocket.

"Have one," he said to Mr. P.

Mr. P took it and sucked it, and then he pulled a little packet out of *his* apron pocket, and he said to Mr. A:

"Don't you want some chewing gum?"

Half an hour later, just as the sun was setting, anyone looking out of the front window might have seen two little figures, one very tall and thin and the other very short and stout, trudging arm in arm along the sidewalk.

They were Mr. A and Mr. P, going back to their grocery store.

And from what I can hear, they have never quarreled since.

THE BAKER'S DAUGHTER

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THE BAKER'S DAUGHTER

O BUT the Baker's Daughter is beautiful!

The Baker's Daughter has yellow hair, and every night it is curled with rags, and every morning it stands out in a frizzy fluff round her head. The Baker's Daughter has blue dresses and pink dresses and

spotted dresses, with flounces and flounces on them; she has beads around her neck and jingly bracelets and a ring with a real stone. All the girls in class sigh with envy of the Baker's Daughter.

But the Baker's Daughter is proud. She points her chin and she turns up her nose, and she is very, very superior. You never see her in the Baker's shop. She strolls up and down the sidewalk, sucking her beads.

You all know the Baker's shop, two steps down. It is warm in there, and busy. It smells of hot bread, and every few minutes the Baker, a hot, untidy little man in shirt sleeves, comes up from the basement carrying a big tray of crullers, or shiny rolls, or twisted currant buns. The Baker works hard all day and he never has time to do more than just poke his nose outside the doorway, every hour or so, for a sniff of cool air. It is hard to believe that anything so beautiful as the Baker's Daughter could ever come out of the Baker's shop!

Once I started to write a poem. It began:

O it is the Baker's Daughter,
And she is grown so fair, so fair . . .

I thought I would make a very splendid valentine of it, all written out in a fine hand, with pink roses around and lots of crinkly paper lace, and send it to her, secretly. But unfortunately I found out that it was too much like a poem that someone else wrote a long time ago, and so I have never finished it. But still it always comes into my mind whenever I see the Baker's Daughter sucking her beads.

There was only one thing in the Baker's shop that at all came up in magnificence to the Baker's Daughter herself, and that was the big round cake that sat in the place of honor, right in the middle of the Baker's window. It was a chocolate cake, with all sorts of twirls and twiddles of lovely icing on it, and the word BIRTHDAY written in pink sugar letters. For some reason or other the Baker would never sell that cake. Perhaps he was afraid he would never be able to make another one quite so beautiful. He would sell you any other cake from his window but that one, and even if you went there very early of a Friday morning, which is cruller day, when there are no cakes at all, and asked him for a nice party cake, he would say:

"I can let you have one by three o'clock!"

And if you then asked: "But how about the cake in the window?" he would reply:

"That's not for sale. You can have one by three o'clock!"

For though you should offer him dollars and dollars, he would never sell that cake!

I seldom dare to speak to the Baker's Daughter. I am much too humble. But still she has friends. Never little boys; these she points her chin at, from across the street. But there are little girls with whom she is on friendly terms for as much as a week at a time. Naturally they are very proud. If you can't be a princess or a movie star perhaps the next best thing is to be seen walking up to the drug store soda fountain with the Baker's Daughter, and sitting there beside her on a tall stool eating pineapple sundae.

Now there was one little girl with whom the Baker's Daughter condescended at one time to be friends. Perhaps her name had something to do with it. She was called Carmelita Miggs, and Carmelita is a very romantic and superior name. She had black hair and a pair of bronze slippers, and she was the only little girl

You could have heard a pin drop.

ever seen to stroll publicly with the Baker's Daughter, arm in arm. What they talked about no one knew. But Carmelita sometimes wore the Baker's Daughter's beads, and the Baker's Daughter would wear Carmelita's beads, and altogether they were very, very special friends while it lasted.

And it lasted until Carmelita had a birthday party.

The Baker's Daughter of course was invited, and several other of Carmelita's school friends. It was to be a real party, at four in the afternoon, with ice cream. And the Baker's Daughter said, very grandly, that she would bring a cake.

"I will bake you a nice one," said her father, "with orange icing on it. Now let me see . . . how many of you will there be?"

But that wasn't at all what the Baker's Daughter wanted. Anyone at all could bring a cake with orange icing. "I will choose my own cake!" thought the Baker's Daughter.

But all she said was: "That will be very nice!"

And in the afternoon, while her father was down in the bake-shop kitchen putting the last twiddle on the orange cake (for he wanted to make it something

very special), and while her mother was taking forty winks in the back parlor, and the bakery cat was sound asleep, with her four paws curled under her, behind the counter, the Baker's Daughter crept into the shop on tiptoe, in all her finery, and stole—yes, *stole*—that big magnificent cake from the very middle of the shop window!

You see, she had had her eye on it, all along!

She lifted it up—and a nice, light cake it seemed—wooden platter and all, and she covered it over with sheets of waxy paper and carried it round to Carmelita's house.

O but she looked proud, walking down the street with that big cake in her arms! Everyone turned to look at her.

"What a lovely cake!" cried all the little boys and girls when she arrived at Carmelita's house.

And the wrappings were taken off, very carefully, and it was set right in the middle of the table, with candles all around it.

"*What* a nice light cake!" said Carmelita's mother.

"All good cakes are light!" said the Baker's Daughter.

"It was very, very kind of your father to make such a splendid cake," said Carmelita's mother.

"I chose it myself!" said the Baker's Daughter, tossing her head.

They talked a little, very politely, and Carmelita Miggs showed all her birthday presents. And at last came the moment for the ice cream to be handed round on little glass plates.

"And now," said Carmelita's mother, "we'll all have some of that delicious cake!"

Carmelita had to cut it, because it was her birthday. She stood there feeling very shy, for there was a great silence all round: everyone's eyes were fixed on the cake, and all one could hear was Tommy Bates busily sucking his ice-cream spoon, so as to get through first.

Only the Baker's Daughter sat there proudly, with her skirts spread out, looking indifferent, as though cakes like this were quite an everyday affair with her!

Carmelita took the knife and stuck it into the very middle of the pink icing, and pushed. You could have heard a pin drop.

But the knife didn't go in. Carmelita turned

very red, and took a long breath and tried again.

Still the knife wouldn't go in.

"You must try harder, dear," said Carmelita's mother, smiling pleasantly. "I expect the top icing is a little bit stiff! Do you want me to help you?"

Now Carmelita knew that she had been pushing just as hard as she could. It came upon her, all at once, that there must be something very very queer about that cake! But she took another long breath, again, and this time her mother put *her* hand on the knife, too.

You could have heard *two* pins drop!

And then, suddenly, there was a funny "plop," and the knife went in. And as it went in the cake slipped and turned a sort of somersault, and there it was, upside down, sticking on the tip of the knife that Carmelita's mother was still holding, and everyone looking most surprised. And that wasn't the worst of it!

It was all hollow inside!

In fact, it was just a big pasteboard shell covered over with icing, and *that* was why the Baker would never sell it to anyone!

Can you imagine how the party felt? How the little boys and girls whispered and giggled, how Carmelita wept and the Baker's Daughter grew redder and redder, and snifflier and snifflier, and how Carmelita's mother tried to smooth everything over and pretend that it was really all very funny, and quite the nicest thing that could happen at any birthday party? And how, at the very last minute, while the ice cream was all melting away, they had to send out and buy a real cake, *somewhere else!*

But Carmelita Miggs didn't think it was a joke. She never, never forgave the Baker's Daughter for spoiling her party. For quite a long time she wouldn't speak to her at all. As for the other boys and girls, whenever they met Carmelita or the Baker's Daughter they would say:

"Now we'll all have some cake!"

You would think, after this, that the Baker's Daughter would have changed her ways. But not a bit of it! I saw her, only the other day, strolling up and down the sidewalk and sucking her beads just as proud as ever.

As I went past her I whispered very softly: "Now we'll all have some cake!"

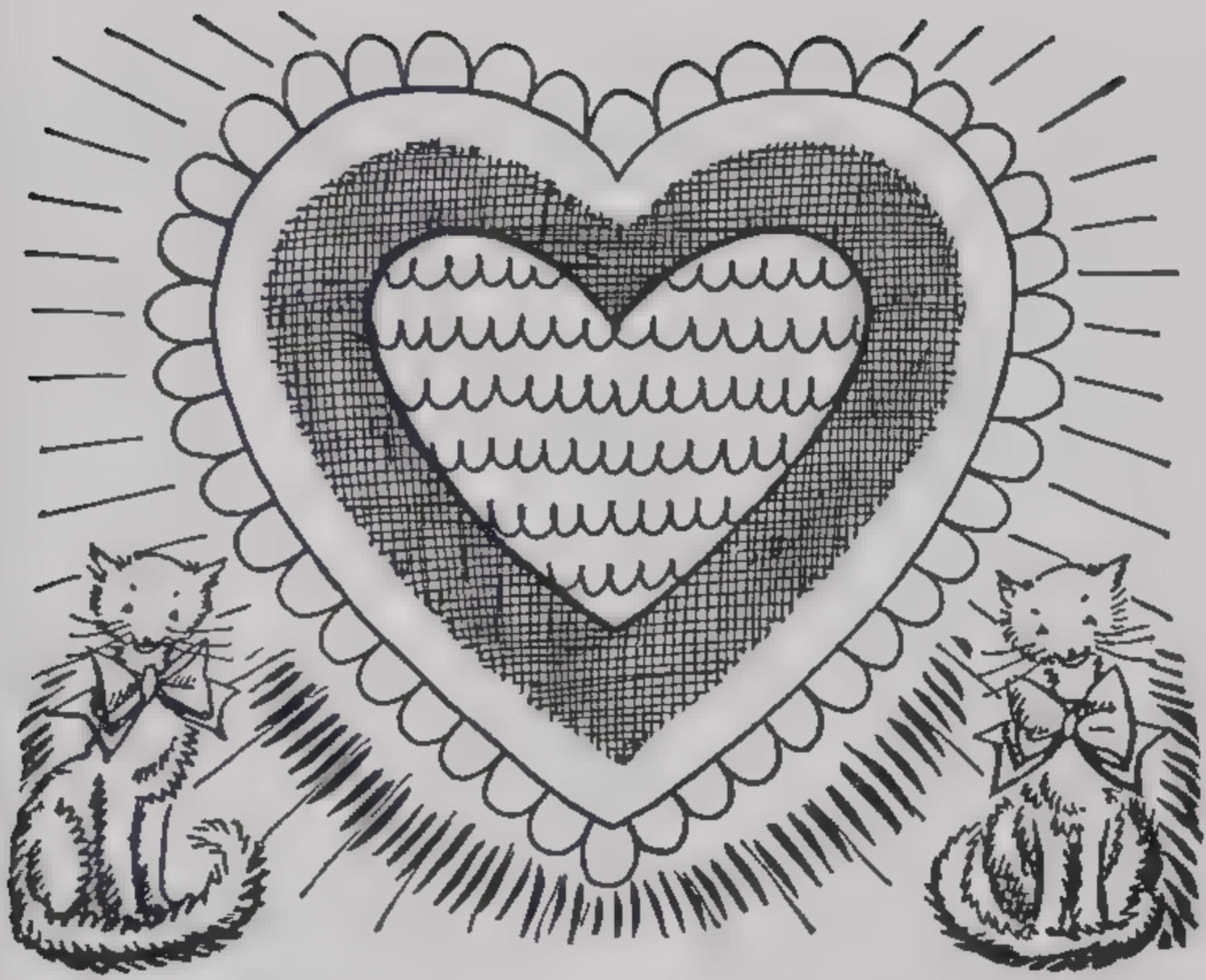
And do you know what the Baker's Daughter did? I hate to tell you.

She stuck—out—her—her—tongue!

There, in the middle of the Baker's window, is another cake. This time it has green icing and pink roses, and two little sugar doves on top. It is even grander than the old one, and will probably last twice as long.

Unless, of course, someone else should have a birthday party!

MR. MURDLE'S LARGE HEART



MR. MURDLE'S LARGE HEART

IN NEARLY every town you will find one store which keeps all those foolish little things that the other stores forget, or are so apt to be out of. Mr. Murdle's is just such a store. Many many years ago, when Mr. Murdle was a round-faced little boy, he must have

said to his mother: "When I grow up I'm going to keep a store!"

He had no idea at all of what he wanted to sell in his store; it was just going to be a store. And so it turned out. He started by buying a little bit here and a little bit there, just as he fancied, and all sorts of funny cardboard boxes began to pile up on his shelves. He thought of ginger ale and slate pencils and newspapers and paper clips, and of course candy; of little celluloid dolls and hairpins and pencil sharpeners, and ash trays with scalloped gilt edges and pictures on them, and lots and lots of cigars. Mr. Murdle himself doesn't really know all that he has in his store, and certainly no one else does. But if ever it happens that you want to buy something that you cannot find in any of the other stores along the street, sooner or later someone will scratch his head and say:

"Well, you *might* try Mr. Murdle, across the way!"

So across the way you go, and sure enough, after Mr. Murdle has stood for a moment thinking, he will rummage about among his cardboard boxes and pull one of them out, and nine times out of ten there it is, the very thing you were looking for!

All this is wonderful enough, but it isn't the most remarkable thing about Mr. Murdle, by any means.

The most remarkable thing about Mr. Murdle is his Large Heart.

Everyone who knows Mr. Murdle will tell you what a Large Heart he has. And it is really true. I have seen it myself, hanging up at the back of Mr. Murdle's store. It is pink and purple, with yellow around the edges, and in the middle, which is white, there are rows of little elastic loops, which once upon a time held tiny bottles of pink and purple and yellow lozenges. Fairy lozenges, they must have been, but that is so long ago that no one knows what they really were like. But the Heart is still there.

It is a fine thing for anyone to have such a Large Heart. But there are disadvantages also, especially for anyone like Mr. Murdle, who is in business, and who really ought to be thinking of money every minute, as all the other storekeepers do. It makes it very nice of course for Mr. Murdle's customers, but it must be difficult for Mr. Murdle. That Large Heart of his is always getting in the way.

When a little girl comes into his store, for instance,

and wants an ice-cream cone and has only three cents, or when some little boy wants candy and Mr. Murdle knows perfectly well that he should only give him five chocolates for a nickel, then that Large Heart begins to whisper to him, and before Mr. Murdle knows it he has handed out the cone with an extra lump of strawberry ice cream on, or he has slipped seven chocolates into the bag instead of five. And if you want some particular sized envelopes, or some special kind of paper clip such as you bought three years ago and have never been able to find since, and Mr. Murdle has hunted through and through his card-board boxes and finally found it, then as likely as not he will say: "Oh, I've had that in stock so long I wouldn't know what to charge you for it. We'll make it up next time!" And next time, of course, never comes.

Then there are the cats.

It began with one cat. She was a tortoise-shell cat, and she found that the pleasantest place to spend the morning was curled up in the sun, on top of Mr. Murdle's stack of daily papers, just inside the store. She spent every morning there, and usually the after-

She didn't approve of cats.

noon as well. Mr. Murdle used to give her the melted ice cream that was left over at night.

Presently she married and had a family, and they all came to live in Mr. Murdle's store. Several of her cousins came, too. Now there were eleven cats, and not nearly enough melted ice cream to go round. So Mr. Murdle—having such a Large Heart—took to melting the ice cream on purpose. He found that the cats liked vanilla best, so he always ordered more of the vanilla than of any other kind, and with it he gave them crumbled-up wafers and peppermint creams.

Early every morning when Mr. Murdle came to open the store, there were the cats waiting for him, and the very first thing he did was to look in the ice-cream can and see if there was anything left over from the day before. Usually there wasn't, and then Mr. Murdle would take eight pennies from the till behind the counter and go over to the grocery to buy milk for the cats' breakfast.

Everyone liked Mr. Murdle, including the cats, and Mr. Murdle himself was one of the happiest people in the world, and all on account of his Large Heart.

But there was one person who did not at all approve

of Mr. Murdle's Large Heart. This was Mr. Murdle's aunt. It may seem funny for anyone like Mr. Murdle, who is at least forty and quite bald on the top of his head, to have an aunt; but he had, and one fine day she came all the way from Vermont to keep house for him. She was a busy, active sort of woman, and not content with managing Mr. Murdle's house for him, she soon began to think of managing his store as well.

She didn't approve of the cats and she didn't approve of the little boys and girls. In fact, she didn't approve of anything at all that Mr. Murdle liked and least of all of the way he did business. She decided that all that sort of thing must be changed.

At first she didn't have much success. Mr. Murdle had been going along very comfortably in his own way for so long that it wasn't easy, even for a determined person like Mr. Murdle's aunt, to change him. But she did her best, and as luck would have it, while she was rummaging about and tidying the store out one day, she came upon Mr. Murdle's Large Heart. She didn't at all know what it was, but she certainly didn't like the look of it. She leaned on her broom and stared.

"Now that's a foolish sort of thing," she said. "Cluttering the store up and taking space where it isn't wanted. I'm just going to throw it out!"

And she did.

From that moment, a very dreadful change came over Mr. Murdle.

The aunt thought it was all due to her lecturing and her good advice. But it wasn't at all. It was just because Mr. Murdle had lost his Large Heart.

In two days you wouldn't have known Mr. Murdle's store.

Everything was tidy, and Mr. Murdle himself just as businesslike as he could be. He knew the price of everything. When little boys came in and asked for a nickel's worth of candy, believe me they *got* a nickel's worth of candy, and not one speck more, and if the little girls hadn't enough money for their ice-cream cones they might just turn right around and walk out again. It was terrible, and as for the cats, they all left in a body and went to live with the fat lady at the delicatessen store across the way Mr. Murdle said he couldn't afford to feed a lot of lazy cats that did noth-

ing but sleep all day, and that moreover they mussed up his newspapers.

Can you *imagine* that!

All the little boys and girls were very upset. But luckily there was one little boy who had more sense than the rest.

He was loitering in the store one day. Mr. Murdle's aunt happened to be away shopping, or you may be very sure she would have chased him out. But there he was staring about him, and trying to make out just why it was that everything should look so different. And all at once he realized that something was missing.

It was Mr. Murdle's Large Heart.

It wasn't there in its usual place above the counter, and it wasn't anywhere in the store, though he searched high and low. Being a clever little boy he soon put two and two together.

"I bet you," he said, "that mean old woman has thrown it out!"

He went straightway into the yard behind the store, where Mr. Murdle kept all his old boxes and empty crates, and began to hunt. And sure enough, after a

little while there he found it, thrown out with a pile of rubbish and broken pasteboard boxes, waiting to be burned.

It was torn at once side and a bit crumpled, but he smoothed it out and carried it back to its old place on the wall behind the counter, and to make sure this time, he fetched a hammer and nails and he *nailed* it, all around the edge.

Not even Mr. Murdle's aunt could have torn it down again!

What's more, she never got a chance. For as soon as Mr. Murdle set foot in the store, now that his Large Heart was back in its right place again, he became just the same Mr. Murdle that he had been before.

The very first thing that he did was to send his aunt packing.

Then he telephoned for fresh ice cream—every kind he could think of—and he opened all the candy boxes and told the little boys and girls, who by this time had heard the news and had all come trooping round, that they might help themselves, and if they didn't have any money they could pay him next year.

And he dragged his old armchair out, and lit a big cigar and settled down by the doorway, as happy as could be.

When the cats saw that, they all came trooping back again too.

So to-day things are just as they used to be, and there is very little danger they will ever change again. Not as long as Mr. Murdle's Large Heart stays there, right in its place, and that, you may be very sure, will be for a long time to come.

As for Mr. Murdle's aunt, she gave him up as a bad job and went back to Vermont, broom and all.

And if you don't believe me, all you need do is to walk into Mr. Murdle's store some fine morning, past the curled-up cats and the newspapers, and ask for a nickel's worth of candy.

You will see how much you get!

THE SADDLER'S HORSE

THE SADDLER'S HORSE

I WONDER how many of you who read this story have ever seen a cigar-store Indian?

I don't mean in pictures, or in someone's collection of old-fashioned curiosities, but a real one, all carved and painted and standing just where he should stand,

on the sidewalk outside the cigar-store door. Not so many years ago a cigar-store Indian used to be quite an everyday sight, almost as common as a barber's pole. And as for saddlers' horses, many a town that really was a town used to have one, and very proud they were of him.

I don't know where all the cigar-store Indians have gone to. Perhaps they are still living somewhere, here and there, in private families. Perhaps they have all migrated in a body to the great open spaces, or wherever it is that Wooden Indians do go. Certainly one does not see them any more on the sidewalk, kindly offering one a cigar or a pinch of snuff, as they used to do.

But I do know of one place where there is still a Saddler's Horse.

He is very big and tall, painted all over a pleasant varnishy dapple gray, and he stands outside what is still the saddler's store—though it sells other things as well nowadays—in the open space near the railroad station, just two minutes' walk from Mr. Murdle's store. All day long he stands there and dreams.

He dreams of the old days when there were no air-

planes and no automobiles and no gas pumps; when the railroad station was very much smaller and the big hotel had not yet been built, nor the concrete highway; when it took country folk a whole day, instead of an hour, to get to town and back, and they drove in spring-top buggies and buckboards and farm wagons, and instead of parked cars by the sidewalk edge there were horses, long rows of them, tied in the shade to hitching posts under the big elm trees.

In those days the feed store and the hardware store and the saddler's were quite the most important stores in town. And the Saddler's Horse, standing out there with the very newest style of shiny harness buckled on his back for every passer-by to admire, would gaze down his nose at the country horses switching their tails under the elms, and feel that he was very, very superior.

But times have changed. There are gas pumps now instead of hitching posts. Automobiles and trucks go up and down the street; very few teams pass by, and the Saddler's Horse rarely sees a buggy at all. But still he stands there, all day long, watching the traffic go past, and at six o'clock, when the train whistle

blows, the saddler wheels him indoors and puts him to bed for the night.

Just across the street is an antique shop. It happened that one day, not very long ago, the storekeeper came across a Wooden Indian. I don't know where he found him, but he brought him home, together with a grandfather clock and an old bureau and a print of a little girl hugging a kitten, and he stood him out on the sidewalk just beside the shop door.

As soon as the Wooden Indian saw the Saddler's Horse, and as soon as the Saddler's Horse caught sight of the Wooden Indian, they began to shout to one another across the street. The Saddler's Horse was very pleased. He hadn't seen a Wooden Indian for years and years. It was just like old times come back again.

"Hello," cried the Indian. "What are you doing there? I haven't seen a horse like you for ages!"

"Oh, I live here," said the Saddler's Horse. "I'm the oldest person in this town! I've been here longer than the Town Hall itself."

"Well, well," said the Wooden Indian. "Times have surely changed, haven't they? None of these nasty

automobiles about when *we* were young! I don't like them, and I don't like the gas pumps, either. Things used to be much better. You and I are losing our jobs now. I've lost mine already. Antiques, that's what they call us nowadays! Still, I've spent the last five years in a barn, and it feels good to stand out on the sidewalk again and see the folks passing. I've always been used to an outdoor life, and I like it. But tomorrow I suppose someone will come along and buy me, and then there'll be an end of it all——"

Just then a big truck passed by. It made so much noise that neither of them could hear the other speaking.

"*That's* what I complain of!" said the Saddler's Horse, when it had passed. "All that noise, and it shakes one to pieces! Yes, the old times were much better."

"Tell you what," cried the Wooden Indian as soon as he could make himself heard once more. "Suppose you and I take a trip together? We might never get the chance again! Everyone should have a good gallop once in his life. They think we are back numbers, here, but we'll show them! Come along!"

He hopped across the street, right between the automobiles, and made one spring to the back of the Saddler's Horse. The Saddler's Horse had no time even to think; he just threw up his head and snorted, and off they went! Out ran the antique dealer, out ran the saddler, waving his arms and shouting, but it was too late. The Saddler's Horse and the Wooden Indian were off together, and nothing could stop them!

First they galloped by the railroad station, dodging in and out among the jitneys and busses and parked cars; then up the hill, round the corner by the Post Office and into Main Street. Everyone turned and stared. Little boys yelled, shopkeepers ran to their doorways, old ladies dropped their parcels and screamed. People shouted:

"It's a circus parade!"

"It's a new advertisement!"

"It's a wild Indian gone crazy!"

And among all the shouting and excitement the saddler and the antique dealer ran puffing and panting along, shouting: "Stop them! Stop them!"

But no one could stop them.

Down Main Street they galloped, right through all

the traffic. The policeman ran out and blew his whistle at them, but they dashed straight by him. Past the cinema, past the bank and Town Hall, and when they came to tall Stop and Go sign on the corner the Saddler's Horse jumped clear over it. Then his great hoofs thundered over the bridge, and they were gone.

The townsfolk were left staring.

"Did you ever hear of such a thing!" they gasped. The old gentlemen mopped their foreheads, and the old ladies picked up their parcels again. "The idea of tearing along like that!" they cried indignantly. "Something ought to be done about it!" As for the traffic cop, he was as red in the face as a beetroot, and he shouted and waved at the automobiles as if it were all their fault.

The little boys craned their necks down the street. They were still hoping to see the rest of the circus parade.

Before long the news had gone out over the whole countryside. Startled motorists pulled up at wayside gas stations, telling of great hoofs that had thundered behind them along the highway, of a huge gray horse

that had flashed by in a cloud of dust and disappeared. Up and down the state roads, far and wide, motor-cycle cops went whizzing past, looking everywhere for a crazy Indian on a big gray horse.

Meantime, many miles away in a green meadow by the roadside, the Wooden Indian and the Saddler's Horse had stopped to rest.

"That was a grand ride!" said the Wooden Indian as he slid off.

"It was!" panted the Saddler's Horse.

"Didn't we give them a scare?" said the Wooden Indian.

"We did!" puffed the Saddler's Horse.

To tell the truth, he was beginning to feel a bit tired, and was quite glad to stop galloping for a while and just rest quietly in the deep grass. It had been grand while it lasted, but now, all at once, his wooden limbs began to tremble and his wooden back began to ache. To-morrow, he knew, he would be terribly stiff in all his joints. After all, when one is as old as the Saddler's Horse, and has never galloped before in one's life, one is bound to feel it!

"Good-bye!" said the Wooden Indian.

Just then, somewhere in the distance, a train whistle blew; a long, plaintive note. The Saddler's Horse gave a start. He thought all at once of the sidewalk and the trees and the railroad station, the familiar street that he had gazed on for so many years. Six o'clock . . . at this very moment, perhaps, the saddler was stepping out of the doorway in his apron, ready to wheel him back into the cool, dark store to sleep for the night.

"Don't you think," said the Saddler's Horse in a rather shaky voice, "that we ought to be turning back now?"

"Back?" said the Wooden Indian. "I'm not going back! You can go if you want to. I shall stay here for the rest of my life and live in the woods!"

The Saddler's Horse looked doubtfully at the meadows, at the tall dark woods behind, and the sky already deepening to sunset.

"Well . . . good-bye!" he said at last.

"Good-bye!" said the Wooden Indian.

Slowly and stiffly the Saddler's Horse began to limp back along the dusty highroad towards town. Every once in a while he turned his head to gaze back. There in the middle of the field, grown each moment smaller

and smaller, he could see the Wooden Indian standing, waving his arms, clear and distinct against the sunset.

The saddler felt not at all cheerful that evening as he stood in his doorway, staring across the street. For one thing, he was afraid that at any moment the policeman might come and arrest him, on account of all the disturbance that had occurred. He had talked it over with the antique dealer and they had both decided that the wisest thing was to say nothing about it. Still, one never knew.

Besides, he really did miss the Horse. He was proud of him, and they had lived together so long that he was like an old friend. All these years the saddler had wheeled him out every morning, and wheeled him in to bed every night, and now goodness alone knew where he was or what had happened to him!

When the six o'clock whistle blew, the saddler had all he could do to keep from bursting into tears.

But next morning, when he opened the store door, his heart gave a great jump.

"Bless me!" cried the saddler.

For there in his old place on the sidewalk stood the

Saddler's Horse, gazing down his nose at the automobiles just as usual. He looked a little dusty and perhaps a bit shaky on his legs, and of all strange things, there was a burdock caught in his long tail! But otherwise he was none the worse. There he stood, and there he stands to this day, perfectly contented, for he has never tried to run away again. You may see him yourself, any time between eight and six, if you happen to be passing by.

As for the Wooden Indian, no one has ever set eyes on him again.

THE SAD STORY OF MR. PORIUM'S FAMILY

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THE SAD STORY OF MR. PORIUM'S FAMILY

MR. PORIUM'S store stands halfway down the street.

You can tell it at once, because it has two windows and a very wide doorway, and just above the doorway is his sign:

DRYGOODS E M PORIUM

If you need a dress or a hat or a bathing suit or three safety pins or a yard of sprigged calico, you must go to Mr. Porium. He has spools of thread too, and overalls and handkerchiefs, and any of these things he will be very glad to sell you. But you must always be extremely careful, when you go there, never to ask after Mr. Porium's family.

He doesn't like it.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Porium has quite a large family. What's more, they all live in Mr. Porium's store, so whenever you go there you can't help meeting them, which makes it rather awkward. To begin with, there are Mr. Porium's two little boys, Albert and Edward, usually standing one on either side of the doorway, and after you pass them you are nearly sure to be met by Mrs. Porium herself, standing just inside the store all dressed up in one of Mr. Porium's newest and nicest frocks. And if you walk right by her, pretending not to take any notice, as you may very well do, there are always Gladys and Ethel, the twins,

They were all singing away.

ready to take you by surprise where you least expect them. And that isn't all, either. There's the baby as well.

Of course, if Mr. Porium doesn't happen to be about, you can nod to Albert and Edward, and you may stop, as I very often do, to say good-morning to Mrs. Porium, which always pleases her. But you mustn't be surprised if she doesn't answer you.

She hasn't any head.

Now the terrible truth is out. *Not a one* of Mr. Porium's family has a head. All they have is a bit of black varnished neck sticking up above their collars. That is why he doesn't like to talk about them. That is why it is often so embarrassing to go into the store. And that is why, if when he is cutting off a yard of ribbon or measuring a length of calico, he looks up and happens by any chance to see your eyes fixed on Gladys or Ethel, or on the back of Mrs. Porium's dignified figure near the doorway, poor Mr. Porium will sometimes drop his scissors or shuffle his feet, or else scratch his head and begin to talk about the weather, very quickly. He is afraid you are going to ask *why* his family have no heads. And that,

of course, is a thing about which he is very sensitive.

It is sad to see Mrs. Porium, such a hearty bustling woman in her check bungalow apron (1.98) or her silk evening frock (14.75); it is sad to see Albert and Edward and Ethel and Gladys, such polite, well-behaved children as they are. But the saddest sight of all is Mr. Porium's baby, in her little woolly sweater, with an empty woolly bonnet right where her head should be. And I don't at all blame Mr. Porium for keeping her hidden away, as he does, at the back of the store, perched up between the piles of fleecy blankets and the stacks of winter underwear. For whatever Mr. Porium may feel about his wife and the twins and the two little boys, I am sure he feels very, very badly about the baby.

No one can say that Mr. Porium doesn't dress his family well. They have new clothes, and the best in Mr. Porium's store, at least twice a week. Nothing, in fact, is too good for them. He even likes you to know just how much their clothes cost. And although the little boys cannot go down to the beach and swim, they have their brand new bathing suits just the same, every season, and very nice they look in them.

MR. PORIUM'S FAMILY

As if *that* could make up for not having a head!

Once upon a time, of course, Mr. Porium's family were just like everyone else. Albert and Edward went to school, and Gladys and Ethel played dolls, and they all teased Mr. Porium, every Wednesday and Saturday, for money to go to the movies.

The trouble was, they were far too musical.

Mrs. Porium was one of these cheerful women, and she liked to sing. She used to sing all day long. It didn't matter whether she were cooking the dinner or waiting on customers; she sang and trilled and chirruped from morning to night, and she was so busy over her singing that as like as not she would give the customer pins instead of elastic, or go on cutting off yards of gingham when they were asking for pillow slips. Naturally, the little boys took after her, and Gladys and Ethel copied the little boys, and there they were, singing all day long.

Mr. Porium, who is by nature a very quiet man, just couldn't stand it. It was no use his asking them to stop; that only made matters worse. The least little thing was enough to set them all off, and once they

had begun they never stopped till they had sung every single thing that they knew. It was just like living in a cage of canaries.

At first, customers didn't mind so much. It made the store, everyone thought, rather cheerful. But soon people found out that it was impossible to get anything they wanted, for Mrs. Porium would be so busy singing that no one could get a word in edgewise, and it was no use asking Mr. Porium, for he had stuffed cotton in his ears, and so couldn't hear them either. And so they would have to go away and buy what they wanted somewhere else. It was all very distressing, and Mr. Porium's business soon began to suffer.

It would be something like this:

CUSTOMER: "I want two pair of——"

MRS. PORIUM: "Tra la la, tra la la!"

CUSTOMER: "Black stockings——"

MRS. PORIUM, (reaching for the yellow sateen) "Oh, *tra* la-la, idie iddledy!"

CUSTOMER: "I said *stockings!*"

MRS. PORIUM: "Oh, stockings, lockings, tra la la!"

You can see for yourself that things couldn't go on like *that!*

Of course Mr. Porium should just have been very firm, but instead he lost his temper.

It happened one bright winter morning. It was a Saturday, so all the little Poriums were there. A customer had come into the store—the first customer in three days—and wanted to buy a handkerchief, and he wanted it in a great hurry. But no sooner had he opened his mouth to ask for one than Mrs. Porium and all the little Poriums started up, in one deafening chorus. In vain the customer shouted; in vain he sneezed and pointed and even stamped his foot. No one paid any attention to him at all. They were all singing away like mad. And in the end he just clapped his hands over his ears and ran wildly out of the store, never, never to return!

It was then that Mr. Porium lost his temper.

He was in the back of the store, pinning price tickets on some new aprons. He had seen all that was going on but, his mouth being full of pins, he couldn't come to the customer's rescue, and by the time he had got safely rid of the pins it was too late.

Mr. Porium was very, *very* mad!

He tore his hair and waved his arms and shouted

out at the top of his voice: "I wish to goodness you had no heads at all!"

Had he never said it!

Of course, it wasn't a nice thing to wish, but how could Mr. Porium tell that the wind was going to change that very minute?

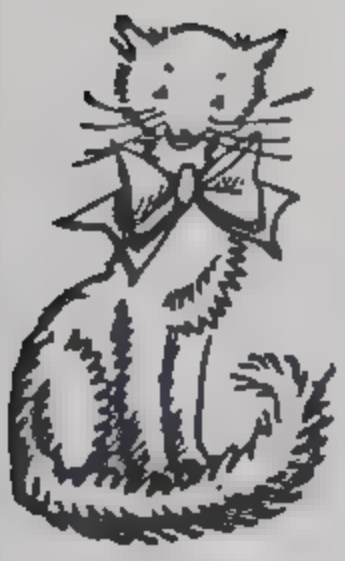
It did. And there, in a twinkling, fell a sudden hush. And there stood Mrs. Porium and all the little Poriums, with no heads at all, and only their little black necks sticking up above their shoulders!

It is said—and I can well believe it—that poor Mr. Porium fairly broke down and wept, then and there.

And of course there is nothing, simply nothing, to be done about it. Unless perhaps Mr. Porium can save up enough money, out of his pins and stockings and calicos, to buy them new heads all round. There are very nice ones to be seen, they say, in the big city stores. Perhaps that is one reason why Mr. Porium works so hard from morning to night, waiting on customers. I've never quite liked to ask him.

Meantime the best thing, as I say, is to pretend to take no notice at all.

POOR MR. FINGLE



He can't remember what he wanted to buy.

POOR MR. FINGLE

AS SOON as you step inside the door of the hardware store you can smell that nice funny hardware smell, the smell of varnish and rope and new oil stoves and straw and packing cases. There is no other place that smells just like it. Even if you were set

down there suddenly, with your eyes tight shut, you would know at once that you were standing in the hardware store.

It is the one store where no one is ever in a hurry. People drop in there and potter about for hours and wander out again, and no one any the wiser. In fact, if ever you lose any of your family in town, and don't know where to look for them, the very best place to go to is the hardware store. Sooner or later you are sure to find them there, poking about in the nail bins or reading the tickets on the mowing machines.

It doesn't matter how long you may have to wait in the hardware store, for time passes here very quickly. There is so much to look at. There are all the gardening tools and wheelbarrows and can openers and scissors; there are the families and families of jugs and saucepans, from the big father and mother saucepans down to the youngest and babiest saucepan of all; there are nails enough to nail everything in town, and all different sizes, sorted out in bins and barrels; there are the books of different kinds of wallpapers, and the cards that show you what color your paint is going to be after you get it home, and there too, in endless rows

of drawers and boxes, are all the knobs and bolts and screws and gadgets that have ever been invented since the world began.

No one ever gets bored in the hardware store. There are too many things to look at. But if ever you want to buy something there you must be very careful and write it down beforehand, on a piece of paper, and never, never lose it. Otherwise the same thing might happen to you that happened to Mr. Fingle.

Everyone knows Mr. Fingle. He is always there. No one pays any attention to him. No one ever asks him what he wants. They know it isn't any use. Poor Mr. Fingle!

No matter what time of day you happen to go to the hardware store, there wandering about somewhere among the bins and the barrels and the paint pots and the stoves, you will come upon Mr. Fingle.

If you hear something rustling at your elbow, or see a shadow moving in the dusk of the store, no need to turn around. It is only Mr. Fingle. There he is, a little white mouse of a man, creeping softly about, picking things up, laying them down again, peering here and there in his gentle short-sighted way, and

every little while just standing still for a moment, with his finger in his mouth, thinking.

He thinks and he thinks, but all his thinking won't help him. He *can't* remember what he wanted to buy!

Years and years ago Mr. Fingle used to live in the little white house up the road, past the shoe store. He had a front porch and a wife and a lawn mower, just like everybody else, and every morning, if it was summer time, you would see him out mowing his front lawn, or if it was winter you would hear him tinkering away somewhere inside the house. For Mr. Fingle had one great passion in life.

He loved to fix things.

If there happened to be a leaky faucet or a door that wouldn't shut or a latch that wouldn't latch, Mr. Fingle knew just what to do about it. He would fetch out his box of tools, and he would look over all the nails and sort out all the screws, and then he would consider a moment, with his head on one side, and he'd say:

"Now, I know the very thing that's needed to fix *that!*"

He'd rush off to the hardware store, and rush back again, and before he knew it, the thing was done.

And as in every house there are about a million things that need fixing, if anyone really wants to fix them, Mr. Fingle was usually busy from morning to night. He'd tinker in the bathroom and he'd tinker in the kitchen, and when he got through there he would wander down cellar, or up in the attic. There was always something to do.

But one unlucky morning, just as Mr. Fingle was going out to fix the lawn mower, his wife called to him. She said:

"Sometime, when you've got a minute to spare, dear, I do wish you'd fix *this!*"

"I'll fix it right away," said Mr. Fingle, "while I think of it."

And he got out his tools and his nail box, and he looked through everything once, and he looked through everything twice. There were all sorts of gadgets there, but there didn't happen to be the particular gadget he wanted. So he said:

"Well, I can't do it right now. I need a thingamabob, and I haven't got one."

His wife said: "Can't you use a screw driver?"

"It isn't *that*," said Mr. Fingle. "I've got all the tools I want. But it's no use trying to fix it with screws. It ought to have one of those little what-you-may-call-'ems, right there, see? Then it will be all right. Remind me next time I go to the hardware store."

"You'd better get several," said his wife, who was a practical woman, "and then we'll have them in the house."

Just then the telephone bell rang, and by the time he had answered the call lunch was ready, and what with one thing and another it was late in the afternoon before Mr. Fingle put on his hat and strolled out into the town. He bought his newspaper and he ordered the groceries, and then he remembered the hardware store.

"While I think of it," he said to himself, "I'll just step over and buy that thingamabob."

So he went into the hardware store. While he was waiting to be served he looked at the hammers and the chisels, and that reminded him that he needed a new pipe wrench, and then he wanted a few yards of copper wire. And while he was about it, how about getting that paint for the kitchen floor?

The hardware young man laid all these things out on the counter, one, two, three, and then he asked Mr. Fingle:

"Is there anything else, sir?"

Mr. Fingle thought a moment, and he said: "Why, bless me, yes! I was forgetting the very thing I came for!"

"And what is that?" asked the young man.

"Why, I wanted a . . .a . . . now what on earth was it," asked Mr. Fingle, "that I *did* want?"

The young man couldn't help him, though he did his best. All his suggestions only made poor Mr. Fingle more and more muddled. It wasn't tacks, and it wasn't sandpaper, and it wasn't a washer, or even a nut and bolt. It was one of these thingamies, but for the life of him he couldn't remember what kind of a thingamy it was.

"I must just think a minute," said Mr. Fingle.

So he began to stroll about the store, looking at this and looking at that, and every little while pausing to say to himself: "Now, what *was* it?"

He went over everything he could possibly think of, in his mind, but it wasn't any of them. All he knew

was that it was something very important, and that nothing else would quite take its place. It was something to fix the . . . to fix the . . .

He couldn't even remember what it was he had been going to fix!

Back rushed Mr. Fingle to his little white house. His wife was making peach shortcake for supper. But she was no help at all.

"Why, yes, dear," she said. "I do seem to remember asking you to fix something for me. I was in the kitchen here, and you were just going out, and I said . . ."

"Yes?" said Mr. Fingle breathlessly. "Yes?"

"I *know* it was something we use all the time, and I was always thinking: 'Now, when Henry has a minute I'll ask him to fix this,' and so I did. Don't you remember?"

"But what *was* it?" Mr. Fingle shouted.

"I tell you how you'll remember," said Mrs. Fingle. "Don't you know you said you couldn't do it till you got one of these little thingamies, and I even said to you, 'you'd better get several,' I said, 'and then

we'll always have them ready.' And you said you would. *Now* don't you remember?"

But oddly enough, Mr. Fingle couldn't remember at all!

That was the beginning of it.

All that night poor Mr. Fingle lay awake and tossed, and first thing next morning, there he was back at the hardware store again.

"All I need to do," he said to himself, "is just to look about me quietly, and then as soon as I see it I shall remember what it was!"

That, as I say, was a long, long time ago.

Days went by, and weeks went by, and now years have gone by, and still Mr. Fingle goes wandering about the hardware store. Everyone has grown so used to the sight of him that now they pay no attention to him whatever. At first they used to shoo him out every evening at closing time, but now they just let him alone. He sleeps somewhere down in the cellar, curled up among the door mats and the wire netting, and there he is perfectly happy.

Poor Mr. Fingle.

HATS FOR HORSES

HATS FOR HORSES

FOR years Miss Minnegan has kept the tiny millinery store next door to the barber's. It is such a tiny little store that you wouldn't really know it was a store at all, except for the two or three hats neatly arranged in the front window, and the bell above the door that

goes dingle-dingle whenever anyone turns the handle, which is very seldom. Just inside the window, where you can read it clearly through the glass, is a card on which is printed in small lettering:

MISS MINNEGAN

MILLINERY PARLORS

In the old days when elderly ladies still wore bonnets, and when young ladies wore beautiful hats like flower gardens, with roses and violets and poppies, and even cherries and sheaves of oats on them, and wonderful bows of ribbon stiffened with wire, Miss Minnegan used to do a very good business. There was no one who could tie a bow like Miss Minnegan, or arrange a spray of roses with such elegant effect, and when it came to bonnets, no one in the world could beat her. Miss Minnegan really understood bonnets. She loved bonnets. And what with bits of draped velvet, and pansies, and curled feathers and jet dingle-dangles, she could be relied upon to turn out a bonnet that everyone would stare at in envy as you walked down the street.

But bonnets, alas, went out of fashion. Old Mrs. Trumbell was the last to cling to them, and after old Mrs. Trumbell took to her bed there wasn't a bonnet to be seen. All those loops of wire and ends of velvet and nice nodding plumes and perky jet aigrettes went into a big pasteboard box on Miss Minnegan's top shelf to await the time when, as she fondly hoped, people would return to sensible ideas once more. Hats still remained, and with hats she could still work wonders. But bye and bye the fashion in hats changed too. No one wanted flowers or feathers or big bows of ribbon any longer. All they wanted, and all they would wear, were miserable little felt things pulled down tight on their heads, with no trimming at all, and looking, as Miss Minnegan declared bitterly, like nothing at all!

Miss Minnegan so hated those little plain hats that for a long while she refused even to keep them in her store. If her customers wanted hats like that, she said to herself, they could go and buy them at Mr. Porium's new drygoods store just across the way. And that, of course, was just what the customers did do. So that trade became slacker and slacker, and the little

front doorbell ceased to go dingle-dingle at all, and there was Miss Minnegan left sitting among her sprays of roses and yards of ribbon, with her scissors idle beside her, wondering what on earth the world was coming to.

It was then that she wrote out the little sign: MILLINERY PARLORS, and set it in her front window—for up to that time there had never been any need for Miss Minnegan to put a sign out at all. Everyone had always known where she lived, and everyone had always come to her whenever they wanted a new hat made or an old one fixed over. But times had changed indeed, and now even the little card, and the few new-fashioned hats that Miss Minnegan bought, very unwillingly, and arranged beside it in her front window, brought scarcely a customer to her door.

In fact, her only visitors were little girls who wanted a yard of ribbon or a scrap of silk to make a doll's frock with, and who knew that Miss Minnegan would let them rummage through her drawers and boxes till they found just what they wanted, and charge them very little for it, in the end.

Now Miss Minnegan's shop was right at the end

of the street, away from all the bustle and traffic, and with a nice cool shady space before it where the old town watering trough still stood. For years there had been talk of doing away with the old watering trough, now that there were so few horses on the road to use it, but still it was a landmark, and the townsfolk had always been used to seeing it there, so there it still stood, deep and cool, with a trickle of fresh water always running from the iron pipe above. Little boys sailed paper boats in it and splashed one another on their way home from school, and the sparrows used it regularly for their morning bath tub, and once in a while some farmer, who still drove a wagon or old-fashioned buggy, would pull up there to give his horse a drink.

One hot summer day, when Miss Minnegan was standing idle at her doorway, wondering, as usual, what the world was coming to, an old farmer drove by in his wagon, with a nice friendly looking sorrel horse between the shafts. He climbed down and mopped his forehead, and began to splash water over his horse's nose and feet before he let him drink. And while he was mopping and splashing, he looked up and

saw Miss Minnegan standing there in the doorway, and nodded to her.

"It's a hot day!" he said.

"It is indeed," chirped Miss Minnegan. "And your horse looks very warm, too."

"That's the sun, blazing down on the state road," said the farmer. "It's very hard on horses, a sun like this. I fixed some leaves over his head, to try and keep him cool a bit, but they dropped off along the road. Years ago I mind seeing in some newspaper how they was selling hats for horses, to keep the sun off their heads, but I've asked here and there, and it seems they don't make 'em any more. I guess horses has gone out of fashion, and that's the truth. It's all cars nowadays, and I'll say this for cars, that they ain't liable to sunstroke!"

Then and there, just like a bolt from the blue, as Miss Minnegan said after, the idea came to her. Hats for horses! Why, of course! Horses didn't care about fashions. What a horse needed was a real sensible *hat.*

She was so excited that her cheeks turned bright pink.

"Are you going to be long in town?" she asked the farmer.

"Why, about a half hour or so," he answered, still mopping his forehead, while the sorrel horse stretched his neck and began to suck up the water in long thirsty gulps. "Just long enough to buy my feed and groceries and to give old Tom here a rest. Why?"

"Because if you really don't mind waiting," said Miss Minnegan, all of a fluster, "I'm sure—I'm very sure—I can make up a hat right away for your horse that will be just the very thing he'd like!"

"Well, now, Ma'am, I'd certainly be grateful, and so would he," said the farmer. "If it won't be putting you to too much trouble!"

"No trouble in the world," cried Miss Minnegan. "Just you wait and see!"

And she fairly hopped back into her little parlor and began pulling open drawers, and dragging down pasteboard boxes, and all the time murmuring to herself: "Now I'm sure—I'm *sure*—I've got the very thing!"

And so she had; for Miss Minnegan was a thrifty person, and never threw anything away that might be useful later. Long ago, when big hats went out of

fashion, she had put aside a whole stock of flat, floppy straw shapes, the kind which in those old days used to be trimmed so becomingly with bunches of oats and red silk poppies. Out she dragged the biggest one, and after considering it a moment, and running to the door to get another good look at the sorrel horse's head as he nodded there comfortably in the shade, she took her scissors and snipped out two holes, one for each of his ears, and bound the holes with red braid, so that the straw edges wouldn't tickle him. And she sewed red braid all around the brim, too, with two plaited braid strings to tie under his chin, and the time the farmer came back again there was a splendid hat for his horse, cool and shady and just an exact fit.

Not for nothing had Miss Minnegan been a milliner all those years!

Plain as it was, there was a style about that hat! Anyone could see at a glance that it came from a first-rate shop, and if one doubted it, there was Miss Minnegan's own label, stitched just inside the crown. A hat any horse might be proud of, and very grand the old sorrel looked in it, with his wise gentle eyes staring down his nose and his two ears stick-

ing out so perkily on top. The farmer was delighted.

"That's what I call a fine hat, Ma'am," he said as he stood off and looked at it admiringly. "Practical, too! What's more, when all the folks out our way see that hat, they won't know rest nor peace till their horses have hats just like it. And *that,*" he ended as he climbed back on the wagon seat, "I'll guarantee, or my name's not John Dover!"

Farmer Dover was right. No sooner did they see that hat than everyone who owned a horse—and there were still quite a number of them round about—wanted a hat like it, and came hurrying to Miss Minegan to beg her to make one. Very soon her stock of fine Florentine straws and Leghorns was all used up, and she had to fall back on braiding the hats herself, which she was quite clever at doing. And as she braided and stitched and snipped away so happily she said to herself over and over:

"Hats for horses! Hats for horses! If people won't wear my hats, horses will!"

And at fifty cents a hat, she soon had quite a little store of money tucked away in the savings bank.

Only one thing worried her. All the hats that she

made were quite plain; serviceable, but not in any sense ornamental, except for a little twist of braid or quirk of ribbon that she couldn't help adding, just to give them an air. And what Miss Minnegan loved to make was a *pretty* hat.

"Feathers or velvet . . ." she thought. "Of course that might not be quite suitable. But a bunch of oats, now, or a few poppies or roses . . . Surely oats would be becoming to any horse!"

And she would tuck a tiny spray in, here or there, just to see the effect, and then reluctantly take it out again. Because, for some strange reason, the farmers all seemed to feel that their horses' hats should be quite plain. As for the horses themselves, of course, they were not supposed to give any opinion, one way or the other.

"If I could make just *one* good-looking hat," said Miss Minnegan, "just to show what I can do, then I wouldn't mind going back to the plain ones again. And I'm sure everyone would like it!"

June and July passed, and the time drew near for the County Fair. The County Fair, as you know, is

a great event. Not only do the farmers send their horses and cows, their turkeys and chickens and pigs, to compete for the prizes and blue ribbons, but the farmers' wives too bring their finest vegetables, cakes, preserves in shining jars, and—if they are clever enough to be able to make such things—their pieced quilts, hooked rugs, embroidery and fine handwork of every kind. In fact, everyone who has made anything at all that he or she can take a pride in sends it to the County Fair, there to be duly admired and praised.

Now among the many horses, brown and sorrel and gray and black, that Miss Minnegan had made hats for during the past few weeks, was an old white mare that belonged to a boy named Billy Jones. Ever since Billy's father died, Billy and his mother had kept the little farm, just a few miles out of town, where they had always lived. Billy's mother raised chickens and vegetables and Billy himself, though he was only thirteen, did all the farm work, and between them they managed to make both ends meet.

Billy took as much care of his two pigs and his one spotted cow and his old white mare as though they were the most priceless animals in the world,

and of them all Fanny, the mare, was his special pride.

He had bought her very cheaply from a neighboring farmer who, seeing that Fanny was long past her best days, was willing enough to trade her to his young friend for a very few dollars, and the agreement that Billy should give him so many days' work a month till the horse was paid for.

Fanny was a sorry-looking creature when Billy first led her home. Her mane was ragged, her coat unkempt, and her bones fairly stuck out till she looked more like a hatrack than a horse. But though she was old, there was plenty of strength in her yet, and by the time Billy had cared for her and fed her and groomed her and combed her for a few months, she began to look a very different horse indeed; so much so that the farmer, every time he met Billy on the road driving his mother in or out of town with her eggs and vegetables, would joke about it and declare that he'd made a bad bargain after all, and the horse was worth a hundred dollars instead of ten! Billy was proud of Fanny, and he had a right to be, for she certainly showed what could be done by care and feeding and attention, if one set one's mind to it.

HATS FOR HORSES

Every time that Billy drove into town he would stop by the watering trough near Miss Minnegan's Millinery Parlors, and Miss Minnegan would always drop her work and come out to have a chat, and ask how Fanny was getting along, and perhaps give her a crust or two of bread or a lump of sugar.

One day while he was waiting for Fanny to drink, and scooping up the water in his hands to splash it over her dusty tired hooves, as he always did, a man who was passing stopped to say:

"That's a fine horse you've got!"

"Indeed she is," returned Billy proudly.

"Why, if *I* had a horse like that," the man went on, "I'd show her at the County Fair, that I would!"

Now the man was only joking, for he knew Fanny's story, and instead of looking at the old horse's sleek coat and carefully groomed mane he was looking at her knobbly knees, and at the rickety buckboard and shabby harness, all patched up with string and rope, which was all that Billy could afford, and so long as it held together what did *that* matter!

But Billy really thought he was in earnest, and the idea took hold of him: why not send Fanny to the

County Fair? For to Billy's loving eyes Fanny was the best horse in the world, and if anyone deserved a prize, certainly she did.

The more he thought of it the more determined he grew. The only thing that worried him was the question of what she should wear. For all the other horses, he knew, would be decked out in their very best bridles and trappings, with shiny leather and ribbons and what not, while poor Fanny hadn't even so much as a decent-looking halter. And he didn't want Fanny to feel ashamed among all the other grand horses at the Fair.

All at once he thought of Miss Minnegan. Long ago Miss Minegan had given Fanny a hat, but Fanny had worn it all summer, working in the fields, and what with the sun and the wind and an occasional thunder shower as well, it was pretty limp and shabby by now. But a new hat! Surely with a new hat Fanny would look grand!

Miss Minnegan was delighted at the idea.

"A hat?" she said. "Indeed she shall have a hat, and the best I can make! She shall have such a hat," said Miss Minnegan solemnly, "as will make every other horse at the Fair green with envy!"

"But it will cost a lot of money," said Billy doubtfully.

"Leave that to me," returned Miss Minnegan. "Haven't I everything ready, here in the house? For the longest while," said Miss Minnegan, "I've been wanting to make a really beautiful hat for a horse, and now, between you and me, Billy, we'll have a chance to show everyone just how fine a horse can look!"

So she thought and she studied, and looked at Fanny long and carefully, full face and sideways and even from the back, just as she used to study her customers in the old days, pursing up her lips and wrinkling her forehead, with her head just the least bit on one side; and when she had thought it all out she took her scissors and her thimble and she set to work.

Right at the bottom of one of Miss Minnegan's pasteboard boxes, laid away in tissue paper, was one hat that she had always kept for some very special occasion. It was a finely braided straw, soft and white and floppy, with an edge like lace. No one else would wear that hat now, to be sure, but Fanny should! Miss Minnegan took it out and pressed it and smoothed it, and having carefully measured with her tape measure,

she snipped the two holes, just at the right distance, for Fanny's ears.

That was only the beginning!

For two whole days and one night Miss Minnegan sat in her little parlor, and snipped and sewed and pondered, humming to herself as she worked, and when she had finished . . .

Well, no one, certainly, had ever seen such a hat before!

The day of the County Fair dawned clear and perfect. The sun beat down on the fair grounds. Everyone was there, dressed in their best. The judges went their rounds, very solemn and important, puffing a little with the heat, and they judged this and they judged that, and they hung the blue and the pink and the green ribbons where they deserved to hang.

In the afternoon they judged the horses. Class after class were shown, the saddle horses and the ponies and the farm horses too, and even one small gray donkey with blue rosettes in his ears. And then the onlookers fidgeted, and looked at the very last line on their programs. It read:

She was the most elegantly dressed horse in the whole fair.

HATS FOR HORSES

CLASS 77. HORSES WITH HATS.

There was only one entry.

Everyone stared. All the people in the seats craned their necks. And there, stepping slowly and with great dignity across the turf, came old Fanny.

Her coat had been groomed till it shone. Her mane and tail had been combed and brushed till every hair stood out glistening. Her clumsy old hooves had been blacked and polished. And on her head was Miss Minnegan's hat.

What a hat it was! It had a bunch of oats on one side and a bunch of poppies on the other, and a beautiful trailing spray of cornflowers that hung gracefully down to nestle against Fanny's mane. And under her chin, tied smartly on one side, was an elegant bow of wide satin ribbon with floating ends.

All she needed was a parasol!

On she came, stepping carefully, holding her head proudly up and glancing right and left with her big rolling eyes. She looked just as if she knew that she was the grandest and most elegantly dressed horse in

the whole Fair, and so she was. Right up to the Judges' Stand she stepped, and there she stood waiting, breathing a little heavily from excitement and switching her tail coquettishly from side to side.

A big cheer broke out from the crowd. Fanny looked around, but it didn't disturb her. She knew right well that she deserved it.

There was a whispered consultation, and then the judge cleared his throat.

"The prize for this entry," he announced, "is awarded unanimously to Mr. William Jones and Miss Elvira Minnegan."

He paused, and the people cheered again.

"I also have great pleasure," he continued, "in announcing that the further prize, of twenty dollars, is awarded to Miss Elvira Minnegan and Mr. William Jones, for the most original exhibit in the Fair!"

Then Billy and Miss Minnegan walked up side by side to the Judges' Stand and bowed and shook hands, and received their prize, while a pretty young lady stepped down and pinned two ribbons, a red and a green, one on each side of Fanny's hat. And there was more cheering, and Billy looked very proud, and Miss

Minnegan looked very happy and flustered, and they shook hands with one another again.

But when they came to look at Fanny, lo and behold, she had chosen the very moment when their backs were turned to stretch out her long pink tongue and curl it around till she caught hold of the dangling bunch of oats and poppies on her hat, and there she was, calmly munching them up!

It was clear to see that, in her opinion, that hat had already done its duty.

GOOD-BYE!

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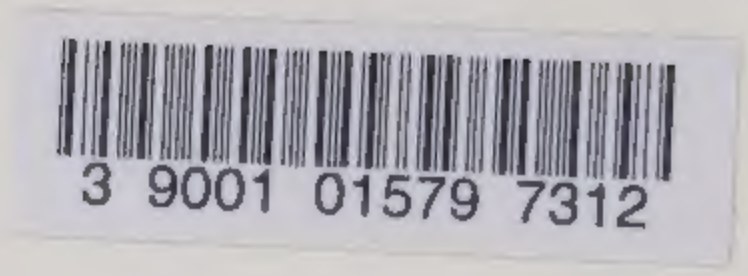
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